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February 16, 1959

Dear Jack:

As you are aware, your letter of October 7, 1958 requesting the views of the Department of State on guidance to be furnished by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to USCINCEUR concerning the latter's "U.S. Air Contingency Plan for Berlin" was the subject of considerable discussion between officers of the Departments of State and Defense. The key question in this discussion was whether the question of test flights above 10,000 feet in the Berlin corridor and the question of planning to meet the contingency of Soviet interference with our air access to Berlin should be dealt with as parts of a single plan and on the same basis.

After re-examining this complex of problems in the light of recent Soviet actions regarding Berlin, the Departments of State and Defense recently concluded that test flights above 10,000 feet should not be carried out at this time (see Department of State's Airgram G-372 to Embassy Bonn dated February 3, 1959).

Under the circumstances, it is suggested that the Joint Chiefs might wish to review the matter and to prepare guidance to USCINCEUR for the preparation of an air contingency plan for Berlin which would omit provision for test flights above 10,000 feet and concentrate on the planning of measures which might be taken to deal with direct interference with Allied flights to Berlin.

The interested officers of the Department of State and of the Embassy at Bonn will of course be pleased to offer any assistance which they can in this matter.

Sincerely,

Livingston T. Merchant
Assistant Secretary

The Honorable
John M. Irwin II,
Assistant Secretary of Defense.

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